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Thistle Ermine *Myelois circumvoluta* (Geoff.) (Pyrilidae), Blackneck *Lygephila pastinum* (Tr.) (Noctuidae) and Convolvulus Hawk-moth *Agrius convolvuli* (L.) (Sphingidae): three interesting Staffordshire moths (Lepidoptera)

Three moths encountered in Staffordshire during the course of the last two years appear to be particularly noteworthy and worth placing on permanent record.

On 28 September 2000, Mr Paul Evans found a large dead moth on the roadside in Stafford town centre and brought it to me for identification. It was immediately recognised as a Convolvulus Hawk-moth *Agrius convolvuli*. After showing it to Keith Bloor, Keeper of Natural History at The Potteries Museum, Hanley, I placed it in my own collection. From June to October 2000, there was migrant moth activity in the county, with Humming-bird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum* (L.) and Pearly Underwing *Peridroma saucia* (Hb.) both recorded. I captured a single specimen of ab. *margaritosa* Haw. of the last species at sugar in my garden on 26 October; several others were all of the typical form. Rush Veneer *Nomophila noctuella* (D.& S.), Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* (L.) and Painted Lady *V. cardui* (L.) appeared in moderate numbers whilst there were lesser quantities of Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus* Geoffr. scattered about the county and a Vestal *Rhodometra sacraria* (L.) was also reported.

On 14 June 2001, in the company of Mr R. H. Heath, I visited the Victoria Road disused railway line that runs through Stoke-on-Trent and Hanley. The day was overcast and quite warm, with a strong threat of rain. We noticed six Thistle Ermines *Myelois circumvoluta* at rest on vegetation. According to David Emley, the Staffordshire Moth Recorder, this is a scarce species in the county. The first record was from Blythe Bridge Mill, Kingstone in 1977 (J. A. Herbert) and since that date only a handful have been recorded, mostly in the south. This new location in the north of the county is, therefore, of some interest. The larvae are associated with thistles and burdock, though the adult is also a sporadic migrant (Bradley, 2000. *Checklist of Lepidoptera recorded from the British Isles*).

On 1 August 2001, a Blackneck *Lygephila pastinum* was taken by me at the same locality. Again, there are very few county records. According to Emley & Warren (2001. *The larger moths of Staffordshire*), the first was at Scot Hay on 18 September 1983 (G. Burgess) and since then it has only been recorded from Gnosall, July 1986 (R. G. Warren), Burnt Wood, 7 July 1997 (R. G. Warren) and the Sandwell Valley, 6 August 1999 (D. Grundy). The specimen is in my collection.— JAN KORYSZKO, 3 Dudley Place, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 7AY.

Hazards of butterfly collecting: A typical Scandinavian picnic – New Delhi, January 1955

We had been tasked with designing the annual Scandinavian picnic in Delhi, India. We selected a little known complex of old Moghul tombs out near the international Palam Airport, then a long way from Delhi, now wholly embraced by the town. At the time there were about two million people in Delhi, now it is in double digits.

I was the chief advocate of the spot. It had many advantages. It was good for butterflies, especially those of the dry zones, mostly of African origins. And it was also just under the landing path to Palam, and I was mad about airplanes. There was also a most splendid bird fauna. And the Moghul tombs were fine, though not very ornate, but several of them had huge populations of bats, which would be my main contribution to the picnic. I was eleven at the time.

We did a lot of butterfly collecting while staking out the ground, but with Scandinavian precision the 30 or 40 Scandinavians in town assembled (we must have made a very decent map). We had a great picnic – rye bread, pickled herrings, liver paste, lots of akvavit (schnapps), real beer, etc.

Then came my star turn. I took the braver members of the Scandinavians down to see the bats in place, but I took two back to show to the less brave members of the team. While I was showing off the bat, it bit me. Dr. Halfdan Mahler, later to become Director General of the World Health Organization as well as the International Planned Parenthood Federation, rushed up. Rabies!